

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 310602  
ORIGIN SSM-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /006 R

66011

DRAFTED BY:SM:JTM Candrew

APPROVED BY:JTM Candrew

-----049324 010113Z /66

R 302225Z DEC 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO USMISSION SINAI 0000

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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM CAIRO DATED DECEMBER 28, 1977 SENT  
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO ALEXANDRIA, AMMAN,BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, JERUSALEM,  
JIDDA, KUWAIT, LONDON, MOSCOW, PAARIS, TEL AVIV, USUN  
NEW YORK IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 23103

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EG IS XF

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS DOWN ON BEGIN

SUMMARY: CONVERSATIONS WITH EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS  
REPRESENTING SPECTRUM POLITICAL PERSUASIONS INDICATE  
COMMON CONCLUSION THAT ISRAEL HAS NOT RESPONDED TO  
SADAT INITIATIVES, BEGIN INTRANSIGENT, PROGNOSIS  
FOR FUTURE POOR. SALVATION FOR PEACE PROCESS SAID  
TO BE U.S. PRESSURE -- BEGIN REPORTEDLY TOLD SADAT  
HE NEEDS THIS TO MODIFY HIS POSITION. THEY ALLEGE  
EGYPTIAN MILITARY, DIPLOMATS, INTELLECTUALS, AND  
GENERAL PUBLIC EQUALLY DEPRESSED BY OUTCOME  
ISMAILIA SUMMIT. SUPPORT FOR SADAT REMAINS HIGH  
BUT FEAR EXPRESSED THAT THIS COULD ERODE IF THERE  
IS NO DEMONSTRABLE PROGRESS SOON. END SUMMARY.  
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1. EMBOFFS MET DEC 27 WITH THREE AHRAH JOURNALISTS  
COVERING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. ALL WERE DEPRESSED AND  
PESSIMISTIC OVER FUTURE PROSPECTS. GENERAL VIEW WAS  
THAT ISRAELIS HAVE NOT BUDGED DESPITE SADAT'S  
INITIATIVES. SADAT SAID TO BE EXPOSED, ISOLATED  
FROM OTHER ARAB STATES, AND IN DANGER OF GETTING

BEYOND HIS OWN PUBLIC. CONVERSATION HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW.

2. HAMDI FUAD. AHARAM'S DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT BEGAN CONVERSATION WITH OBSERVATION SITUATION "SAD, VERY SAD." HAMDI THOUGHT ISMAILIA MEETINGS HAD BEEN "DISASTER;" EGYPTIAN PUBLIC HAD EXPECTED DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH; ISRAELIS HAD GIVEN "NOTHING." IF ONE READ BEGIN'S RESPONSES CLOSELY, ARGUED FUAD, IT APPARENT ISRAELI LEADERSHIP MAINTAINING SAME POSITIONS IT HAS HELD OVER YEARS. BEGIN PLAN IDENTICAL IN CONCEPT TO ALLON DESIGN; PALESTINIAN RIGHTS STILL IGNORED. MILITARY OCCUPATION WOULD REMAIN, ONLY ITS NAME WOULD BE CHANGED. FUAD SAW NOTHING IN BEGIN'S PROPOSALS FOR INHABITANTS OF WEST BANK AND GAZA OR, INDEED, FOR OTHER ARABS.

3. SINAI. ONLY GIVE, IN FUAD'S VIEWS, WAS WITH REFERENCE TO SINAI AND EVEN THERE ISRAELIS WERE LESS FORTHCOMING THAN EXPECTED. ISRAEL PROPOSED TWO-STAGE PLAN, WITH ULTIMATE WITHDRAWAL TO BE THREE-FIVE YEARS AFTER PEACE TREATY. HOWEVER, ISRAEL INSISTED RAFAH SETTLEMENTS WOULD REMAIN AND SETTLERS WOULD BE PERMITTED KEEP "DEFENSIVE" ARMS. SADAT TOLD EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS HE REJECTED BOTH DEMANDS. MILITARY WITHDRAWAL MUST BE ACCOM-  
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PLISHED WITHIN SIX MONTHS AND SETTLEMENTS MUST BE REMOVED. FUAD THOUGHT THESE DIFFERENCES, UNLIKE WEST BANK/GAZA, BRIDGEABLE -- ALTHOUGH THEY INDICATE WIDE GULF BETWEEN EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI THINKING ON ULTIMATE PEACE SETTLEMENT.

4. SADAT. FUAD SAID PRESIDENT, SPEAKING TO LOCAL JOURNALISTS FOLLOWING BEGIN'S DEPARTURE, HAD BEEN UPSET BY PROCEEDINGS. SADAT, REPORTEDLY, TOOK PARTICULAR EXCEPTION TO BEGIN'S ASSOCIATING HIM WITH VIEW THAT 1967 WAR HAD BEEN -- FOR ISRAELIS -- DEFENSIVE ACTION. FUAD THOUGHT SADAT'S REFERENCE IN AGREED STATEMENT TO "JUDEA AND SAMARIA" WOULD HURT HIM IN ARAB WORLD, AND MIGHT DAMAGE PRESIDENT POLITICALLY AT HOME.

5. PROCESS. DESPITE MEAGER OUTCOME, SADAT INSTRUCTED EGYPTIAN REPORTERS NOT TO BE DISCOURAGED BUT TO REGARD ISMAILIA AS BEGINNING OF PROCESS. MINISTERIAL LEVEL COMMITTEES WOULD BEGIN SHORTLY AFTER NEW YEAR; MOMENTUM WOULD BE MAINTAINED. FUAD WAS NOT CONVINCED BUT INDICATED PRESS COMMENTARY

WOULD BE UPBEAT. HE EXPRESSED DOUBT WHETHER PESSIMISTIC APPRAISAL HE PREPARED FOR NEXT DAY'S AHRAH WOULD BE PRINTED (IT WASN'T).

6. DEPRESSION. FUAD SAID HIS ASSESSMENT SHARED BY EGYPT'S DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY ELITE. QUOTED MINDEF GAMASY AND CAIRO CONFERENCE REP MEGUID TOO SUPPORT THIS. BOTH, HE MAINTAINED, HAD HOPED FOR GREATER ISRAELI FLEXIBILITY. ON MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC FRONTS THEY REPORTEDLY CONCLUDED ISRAELIS HAD GIVEN SADAT LITTLE WITH WHICH TO WORK.

7. PRESSURE. ACCORDING FUAD, SADAT CLAIMED BEGIN TOLD HIM THAT IN ORDER MAKE FURTHER CONCESSIONS HE CONFIDENTIAL

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(BEGIN) NEEDS ADDITIONAL PRESSURE, WHICH HE ASKED EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT PROVIDE. FUAD OPINED REAL PRESSURE WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM U.S.G. AND HE URGED THIS BE APPLIED QUICKLY.

8. HODA TAWFIQ. HAMDI CLAIMED HIS WIFE, GUMHURIYYA DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT HODA TAWFIQ, IS EVEN MORE UPSET OVER EVENTS. HODA WAS SUFFICIENTLY IRRITATED BY BEGIN'S ANSWERS AT PRESS CONFERENCE (AND ISRAELI JOURNALISTS' BOORISH BEHAVIOR) TO DESCRIBE ISRAELI PM AS "REAL BASTARD." HAMDI THOUGHT LAST PHRASE WAS CAPTURED FOR ISRAELI AUDIENCE BY OPEN MICROPHONE OF ISRAELI RADIO. HODA, IN ANY CASE, HOPES IT WAS.

9. LUFTI AL KHULI. MARXIST JOURNALIST DESCRIBED ISMAILIA OUTCOME AS "HOPELESS." SAID THERE HAD BEEN MINIMUM MOVEMENT ON SINAI, NONE ON OTHER FRONTS. CLAIMED ONE RESULT WOULD BE THAT JORDAN WOULD STAY OUT OF NEGOTIATING PROCESS. THIS, HE CONCLUDED, WILL INSURE DIVISIONS REMAIN -- ASAD WILL FEEL VINDICATED. AL KHULI VIGOROUSLY MAINTAINED BEGIN GAVE SADAT "NOTHING;" SAID HE "VERY FEARFUL" OVER OUTCOME SADAT'S INITIATIVES.

10. YOUNGER GENERATION. MOST SUCCINCT COMMENT ON ISMAILIA CAME FROM JUNIOR AHRAH DIPLOMATIC REPORTER HIDAYET ABDEL NABI. SHE VEHEMENTLY MAINTAINED THAT NO MORE ISRAELIS SHOULD BE INVITED TO VISIT EGYPT. HIDAYET FOUND ISRAELI JOURNALISTS PERSONALLY OFFENSIVE AND "PUSHY." THOUGHT BEGIN'S REPLIES TO SERIOUS QUESTIONS FLIPPANT, AND INDICATIVE HE NOT APPROACHING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS  
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SERIOUSLY. HIDAYET, MORE EMOTIONAL THAN OTHERS, WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY ANGRY TO POINT OF LOSING ABILITY EXPRESS HERSELF ARTICULATELY IN DISCUSSING BEGIN VISIT.

11. COMMENT. ABOVE REPRESENTS SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVES SINGLE JOURNAL. HOWEVER, INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED RUN ACROSS BROAD EGYPTIAN BODY POLITIC. FUAD IS SQUARE IN CENTER, AS IS HIS WIFE, ALTHOUGH BOTH ARE PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO FORMER FONMIN FAHMY AND MAY REFLECT HIS VIEWS TO SOME EXTENT. AL KHULI'S SENTIMENTS ARE PREDICTABLE FOR PROMINENT LEFTISTS. ABDEL NABI IS CLOSE TO PALESTINIANS IN CAIRO -- BUT IS BY NO MEANS IN THEIR CAMP. WE SUSPECT VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE SHARED BY MOST, IF NOT ALL OF MORE ARTICULATE JOURNALISTIC COMMUNITY. FOR MOMENT, AT LEAST, IT UNLIKELY THESE VIEWS WILL FIND EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC PRINT: WORD IS OUT THAT PAPERS ARE TO ACCENTUATE POSITIVE. NEVERTHELESS, IN CAIRO'S INCESTUOUS INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY THESE CONCLUSIONS WILL BE CIRCULATED AS FAST AS IF THEY HAD BEEN BANNER HEADLINED ON AHRAH'S PAGE ONE. ONE UNFORTUNATE RESULT OF DISAPPOINTMENT OVER ISMAILIA IS THAT OUR JOURNALIST CONTACTS ARE RETURNING TO CLICHES OF PAST, CONJURING UP STEREOTYPES OF ISRAELIS, AND MOUTHING IMPOSSIBILITY OF ARABS AND ISRAEL EVER REACHING PEACEFUL ACCORD. EILTS UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** SM:JTM Candrew  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009